DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 319 CE 042 768

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TITLE Veterans as Students: A Review of the Literature.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Federal Aid; *Higher Education; Literature Reviews; *Student Characteristics; Student Financial Aid; Training Allowances; *Veterans; *Veterans Education
IDENTIFIERS *G I Bill

ABSTRACT

The literature reviewed in this paper depicts the veteran as an older student who performs better academically than the nonveteran. This is accomplished despite lower aptitude scores and a lower high school percentile rank. The veteran is career-oriented, committed to the educational process, and better able to use the education once it is obtained. The veteran works either full- or part-time to supplement income from the G.I. Bill. Veterans enroll in public, state-supported schools with lower tuition costs and a greater variety of courses. The veteran tends to be more interested in business courses with a more direct application and immediate return. The veteran, who may be only slightly older than the nonveteran, has the advantage of considerable work experience in the Armed Forces. This work experience may make the veteran eligible for advanced academic standing through nontraditional credit earned in the Armed Forces. A heightened sense of self-esteem, brought about through experience and military training, combined with financial assistance (G.I. Bill) creates a strong desire to succeed. More research is needed in comparing the veteran to the adult student because of a great similarity between the two. Attitudes toward learning and sense of self-esteem should be compared. (YLB)

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Veterans As Students:

A Review of The Literature

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With the current decline in college registrations higher education is in a "pause period" similar to that which occurred in 1944-1949. (Dooher 1980) described this period and how Massachusetts' colleges and universities set out to "...prepare new policies and programs for an older, non-traditional (sic) student". These older students were the returning veterans of World War II.

During the present period of lower enrollments, educators are again preparing for an older nontraditional student. Adults are entering the universities in increasing numbers and for a multitude of reasons. With the aging of the United States' population, it is essential that administrators and faculty understand the needs and motivations of adult students and veterans as they are rapidly forming an important percentage of the student body.

The veteran has returned to the universities in measurable numbers since World War II. The record number of service members that returned to college after the war was due in part to benefits provided by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. This is better known as the G. I. Bill. The G. I. Bill has been extended throughout the years to cover veterans who have served in Korea and Vietnam. The current G. I. Bill will expire on December 31, 1989 after which a new program of educational assistance will take effect. Considering these facts, we can assume that the veteran student will continue to be on campus well into the 1990's.

The body of knowledge written about the veteran as a student is limited. In their 1984 study Dienstfrey & Byrne found that

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10.6 million veterans stated that they had at least some college. Out of a total of 28,027,000 living ex-service members, Veterans Administration (1985), it appears that there is a considerable need for more research in this area. The present review has two purposes: (a) to review the existing data on veterans as students and to attempt to focus on their apparent high sense of self-esteem, and (b) to suggest further areas for research.

Veterans As Students

After World War II veterans returned to colleges and universities in large numbers. This was due in part to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. Some of the universities were prepared for this onslaught and had spent considerable time readjusting to this new type of student. The colleges and universities of the state of Massachusetts did the following:

> The admissions process was improved as less emphasis was placed on past academics and more reliance was placed on improved counseling techniques and new testing mechanisms. In academic policy, credit for service programs was generous, well reviewed and represented an acknowledgement that important learning, worthy of academic credit, took place away from campus environs. Short courses, prematriculation programs and tutorial services provided a smooth transition to

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campus life. Dooher (1980).

These changes not only prepared the way for the veteran, they provided an interesting spin-off in that the campus established at Fort Devens, Massachusetts specifically for veterans "...was important in the development of a public university in Massachusetts and served as a precedent for community college development in Massachusetts". Dooher (1980).

In 1950 the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey sponsored a study in which they examined 10,000 records of veteran and nonveteran college students of 1950. One of their major findings is that "...veteran students prove to be superior achievers as compared with non-veteran (sic) students..." Frederiksen & Schrader (1950). In a study conducted in the fall of 1963, 1964 and 1965 on veteran and nonveteran freshmen at Urbana-Champaign and Chicago Circle colleges, Paraskevopoulos & Robinson (1969) found that "the mean difference in first semester grade point average between veteran and non-veteran (sic) groups was .267. This difference was statistically significant at the .01 level ($t=2.26$; $df=86$)". In this study the authors selected their subjects by matching veterans to nonveterans in terms of year and term of entry, campus, college curriculum, American College Test scores and high school percentile rank. There were matches for 46 veterans in 1963, 26 in 1964 and 20 in 1965. The results of this study "...suggested that the academic potential of veterans is underestimated by ACT; C and HSPR". Paraskevopoulos & Robinson (1969).

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In data from the National Longitudional Study of the High School Class of 1972 Chapman (1983) concluded:

> ...that veterans did perform as well academically as nonveterans in college, even though they did not do as well in high school. Further, there were numerous similarities between veterans who received the G. I. Bill and nonveterans who received federal financial aid.

The study also noted that veterans were older, predominately white single males. They possessed lower high school percentile rank and grades than nonveterans. Veterans were mostly enrolled in business programs in public two year colleges. They were employed while students, did not change majors but changed schools more often than nonveterans. Few veterans continue their education after the completion of a four year degree. Chapman (1983).

In a report distributed by the Veterans Administration Klein (1984) found the following:

> In 1973, veterans had distinctly higher educational attainment than nonveterans, but in 1983, their educational profiles were very similar. For example, by 1983, the gap in median education closed to the point that the median was the same for veterans and nonveterans. Furthermore, a slightly higher proportion of nonveterans were college graduates than veterans, which reverses the picture of a

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decade earlier. The contrast between veterans and nonveterans over the decade diminished largely because the educational attainment of the Vietnam era age group 25 to 39 increased and the proportion of 25 to 39 year-olds who are veterans declined.

The area of student services to the veteran was the theme of a study conducted at the University of Texas, Austin in 1975. In response to questionnaires sent to University of Texas, Austin veterans the following data was obtained. The veteran was most likely to be white, male and married. The veteran used student services very little, was academically successful and career oriented. They appeared to lack information regarding social services in the community, qualifications for veterans' benefits and part-time work. The veterans were only slightly older than nonveterans. Plotsky (1975).

Throughout the reviewed literature the veteran is depicted as an older student who performs better academically than the nonveteran. This is accomplished with lower aptitude scores and a lower high school percentile rank. The veteran is career oriented and committed to the educational process. The veteran also appears to be better able to utilize the education once it is obtained. The average veteran at each level of education earns 1.5 times more than the nonveteran. Klein (1984). The veteran has the advantage of the G. I. Bill to help cover the costs of

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tuition. The veteran works either full or part-time to supplement this income. Attendence at public, state supported schools translates to lower tuition costs and a greater variety of courses. The veteran tends to be more interested in business courses. Chapman (1983). These would have a more direct application and provide an immediate return for the time invested in college. The veteran, who may be only slightly older than the nonveteran, has the advantage of work experience in the Armed Forces. This could be derived from over 134 different career fields and subspecialities. U. S. Department of Defense (1985). The experience can be considerable. The veteran, as a result of this work experience, may be eligible for advanced academic standing through nontraditional credit earned in the Armed Forces. This military credit accounted for 82 percent of the nontraditional credit earned by the veteran in a study conducted at the University of Florida. Harden (1976).

The Armed Forces' veteran emerges as an individual with a high sense of self-esteem brought about through experience and military training. This heightened sense of self-esteem may have been lacking in high school and could have been reflected in the lower aptitude scores and high school percentile rank. The veteran has undergone changes within him/herself and as a result has become more aware of his/her capabilities. Cross (1984) in describing her Chain of Response (COR) Model states:

...research suggests that persons who lack

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> confidence in their own abilities (frequently termed failure threatened or deficiency oriented) avoid putting themselves to the test and are unlikely to volunteer for learning which might present a threat to their sense of self-esteem (p. 125).

Veterans have been tested either by choice or by force. They have been placed in an environment that is designed to create an individual that can accomplish whatever is ordered. In elevating the veteran's sense of self-esteem the first step has been taken in propelling the veteran toward his/her goal. The veteran enters the academic environment with the knowledge that success in education is attainable irregardless of his/her previous academic accomplishments. This heightened sense of self-esteem, combined with the financial assistance of the G. I. Bill, creates a strong desire to succeed.

Further Areas for Research

The research on veterans as students has not been extensive. The current studies centering on their academic performance cover over 30 years. One major study seems to appear about every 10 years with few in between. This is surprising considering that there is such a great similarity between the veteran student and the adult learner. The veteran possesses different life experiences and training than the adult learner, but the motives for returning to higher education are the same. More research is needed in comparing

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the veteran to the adult student. We must also attempt to determine if the veteran's sense of self-esteem is higher than that of the average adult student.

Conclusions

The veteran in higher education performs better than the nonveteran. They are career oriented, attend primarily state supported institutions, work while attending school and apparently make better use of the education obtained. The veteran is an adult learner and compares with this group in attitudes toward learning.

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